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SECOND PART  
OF  
PETER'S Visitation:  
A  
LECTURE  
Deliver'd at the  
ORATORY  
IN

*Villars-Street, York-Buildings.*

By Mr. *L A C Y*.

On *Acts*, Chap. xv. Ver. 10.

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*As it is rare to find a Slave who is not a Bigot, no Man can shew me a Bigot who is not an ignorant Slave; for Bigotry is a Slavery of the Soul to certain religious Opinions, Fancies or Stories, of which the Bigot knows little or nothing, and Damns all that do.*

Trenchard.

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*I Love Religion but I hate the Sordid.*

**N. B. LECTURES on CIVIL and  
RELIGIOUS SUBJECTS**, are De-  
livered at the Oratory in *Villars-Street, York-  
Buildings*, Twice every SUNDAY, viz. at ELEVEN  
o'Clock in the Morning, and THREE in the  
Afternoon.

**The SEATS FREE.**



GENTLEMEN,

**T**HE Subject that we have chosen for our present Lecture is the following Words, which you will find in the *Acts* of the *Apostles*.

*Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a Yoke upon the Neck of the Disciples, which neither our Fathers nor we were able to bear?*



**I**S a received Opinion, that without Culture the Mind of Man is unsocial and savage, depraved and corrupted, and every Individual little better than a Beast of Prey to the rest of the Species. 'Tis likewise, advanced, that the Light of Nature, however clear and vigorous in the purest Heart and the strongest Head, or however increased, by the associated Lustre of many such, is insufficient in itself, to purge off this constitutional Proneness to Vice, or point out a proper Medium, to reconcile Passion with Reason, and Appetite with Virtue. A third Assertion, equally venerable with the two former, is, that Religion, or the revealed Will of the Deity, was the only effectual Means to answer this great and necessary End. To which, is added, that, 'thro' divine



Goodness, such a Revelation has Twice actually taken place, in a formal systematical way; first by *Moses*, and secondly by the *Messiah*; besides the occasional Correspondences of God with *Adam*, *Enoch*, *Noah*, and *Abraham*; his supplemental Message to his disobedient People, and their idolatrous Kings, by the *Prophets*; and the Descent of the *Holy Spirit* upon his *Apostles*.

On these Presumptions, Religion is at this Hour esteemed the principal Duty of Society; and, tho' mere Men might foolishly imagine, their own Eale, the Interest of their Families and Friends, the Service of their Sovereign, and the Welfare of their Country, to be the natural Business of Life, our spiritual Guides assure us we are never more mistaken; affirming, that the Duties of the Altar, and the Calls of Devotion, are infinitely more important; according to the Text, *What would it profit a Man, to gain the whole World, if he should lose his own Soul?* Whence they conclude it both just and modest to express themselves, on all publick Occasions, Lords Spiritual and Temporal, Power Ecclesiastick and Civil, Church and King, and the like.

Now, Gentlemen, granting all this to be right-reverend Truth, of the more Consequence Religion is to Government, of the more Consequence it is to us to beware of Imposition: Tho' the Deity cannot err, Man may; and if Truth is infallible, 'tis more than we allow the *Pope* himself. Revelation, without Doubt, descended from above, but it was many Ages ago; and, tho' the *Apostles*, both received the *Holy-Ghost* themselves, and had the Gift of conferring it on others, at present, there does not seem to be the least *Trace* of it remaining; nay we don't so much as know, when, or why, that miraculous Inspiration ceased.

'Tis



'Tis exprefsly faid, that to believe, was all that was required to attain it, either in *Jew* or *Gentile*; it was natural, therefore, to imagine it would continue till the whole World was converted, or, at leaft, while there was any Faith to be found to deferve it. This, however, is certain, that if neither the *Meffiah*, or the *Holy-Spirit*, have fufficiently revealed what we are to underftand by the Duties of Religion, and a fort of divine Residents, or resident Divines, are ftill neceffary for that great End, they of courfe fhould have had a Referve of this extraordinary Grace, by way of Credentials, to demonftrate the Truth of their Miffion; efpecially as we are told, that *false Prophets fhould arife, who, if it were poffible, wou'd deceive even the Elect*. Thus, tho' certain Persons gravely declare themfelves fpiritual Heirs, in a right Line, to the *Apoftles*, we have only their bare Words for it; and, unlefs they could fupport their Claims as their Predeceffors did, it does not feem very reasonable to believe them --- I fay again therefore, we muft beware of Imposition: 'Tis a known Maxim, that the beft things corrupted are the worft; and, if any Set of Men whatever pretend to peculiar Priveleges, without peculiar Talents to deferve them, or peculiar Authority from Heaven to command them, it looks more like Preift-craft than Inspiration; and we cannot guard ourfelves too ftremely againft fo formidable an Enemy. In Temporal Affairs, where all Men are acknowledged equal Judges for themfelves, 'tis almoft impoffible for Oppreffion to difguife itfelf fo as not to be detected; or, by ufurping any mock Majefty whatever, to preferve itfelf from being expofed and punifhed in the End as it deferves. But in Spirituals, What Abfurdities have not been palmed upon the World, for the moft facred Truth? What Cruelty has not  
been

been let loose, under the awful Name of holy Zeal? What Frauds have not been sanctified by the tremendous Name of *God* himself? and, What dreadful Tyranny has not been authorized, according to them, by divine Permission, Grace, Justice, and all the Power and Majesty of Heaven? inso-much that, thro' all History, it appears, more Mischiefs, Ruin, and Confusion, have visited Mankind, under the Cloak of Religion, than all the bloody Contests, which Ambition or Avarice has set on foot, for Property, Dominion, Glory, or Revenge. Nay, hardly one of those ever commenced, without some Pretence from Religion, either in its Beginning or Consequence. Tyrant and Priest, Religion and Persecution, *God* and *Mammon*, sharing almost in every Page of the Records of Time. Neither did the Religion farthest from Truth, most inconsistent with Common-Sense, most unworthy in its Choice of Deity, most useless, or most destructive to the Ends of Life, want its Authorities, Oracles, Priests, Mysteries, Initiations, and Profelytes. Nor that which was most noble and elevated, most agreeable to our sublimest Ideas of a first Cause, or best calculated for the Good of the Universe, fail of false Friends, Traitors to the Dignity of the God-head, and the Welfare of Mankind! who made it their Business to corrupt and debase it, to make it a Snare for Wealth, Power, Titles, and Greatness (tho' every such mercenary Step reversed its very Use and Essence) and stigmatize those for Hereticks, who doubted their Interpretations, questioned their Forgeries, or pointed out their hellish Design, of enslaving Men in this World, under the Pretence of conducting them to a better. By which righteous Artifices of theirs, Religion has appeared so mangled, from Age to Age, that those who were  
most

most desirous to be acquainted with her, hardly knew her ; and all the weak and ignorant, in a Body, blindly worshipped a gay painted Prostitute in her stead.

How then, Gentlemen, shall we disentangle ourselves from this perplexing Maze of Artifice and Pride ? how distinguish the Idol from the Deity, and separate human Institutions from divine Appointment ? I answer, by Reason ; Reason, our first Acquaintance, our oldest Friend, the only Touchstone that *God* has given us to discriminate between Truth and Falshood ; and which is as infallible as *Ithuriel's* Spear, when it operates on proper Objects : that is to say, within the moral Sphere of human Principles and human Actions : For, when it ventures beyond, it loses its very Name, and becomes Phrenzy : Matter, Space, Duration, Spirit, and Deity, being as inaccessible to Enquiry and Knowledge, on one Hand ; as the Nonsense of the Mob, or the metaphysical Jargon of the Schools, on the other. But, tho' Reason is thus limited, 'tis still Reason ; as the Sight, or Hearing, are still Senses, tho' the Musick of the Spheres, and the Substance, Shape, and Magnitude of the Stars, are out of their Reach. 'Tis fruitless, therefore, to call it an *Ignis-fatuus* a deceitful, glimmering Flame ; for if it is no Guide in itself, it must light us to what is : And, however it has been undervalued, for low and mercenary Ends, no Preference can be given to this or that Religion without it. *God* himself, who gave us that Power of distinguishing between Good and Evil, requiring no arbitrary Obedience, but convincing the Mind first, in order to reform the Will. For, were it otherwise, real and pretended Revelation would have equal Authority ; and any God-Smith whatever might shackle us with what Creeds he pleased. 'Tis



'Tis Reason, therefore, pure uncorrupted Reason, which must lead us out of this insnaring Labyrinth ; and its first and most natural Office is, to inquire for the readiest Path. And here, Gentlemen, a Crowd of officious Guides, intrude themselves immediately, whether you will or no ; all pretending to have the sole Clue ; and each, making a Monopoly of Heaven. First, the temperate *Indian*, with his visible Gods, the Sun, and Fire, its Representative here below. Next, the *Jew*, with his Roll of Ceremonies, and his two Tables of negative Morality, enforced by Curses and Promises, in the awful Person, of *God* himself : boasting an Eternal Covenant, ratify'd in the midst of Thunder, and dreaming of a future Saviour, who should compel all the Nations of the Earth to wear his Yoke. Then, a mix'd Multitude of *Christians*, composed of *Greeks*, *Romans*, *Lutherans*, and *Calvinists* ; all deifying the blessed *Messiah*, and professing to obey his Precepts ; while, in Contempt of all Charity, they give each other to be roasted in Hell-Flames, without Redemption. Last of all, the fierce *Arabian*, asserting, with some Reason, that *God*, displeas'd with his two first Favourites, has made a new Election ; breathing a Spirit of Lust and Dominion, and yet glorying in a more refined Morality, than, according to him, was revealed, either to *Christian* or *Jew* ; since his Beneficence extends even to the Brute-Creation, and becomes at once both a Duty and a Virtue. Now, Gentlemen, amidst such an Assemblage of opposite Torrents, Reason must, indeed, be sore beset. To listen to one, is to draw down the Vengeance of the Rest ; and to avoid all alike, is to be damn'd by all alike. For Zeal, seems to be, a natural Enemy to  
Charity

Charity ; and, if you will not enter into Paradise by his Gate, He will do his utmost to bar up all beside.

But, however great the Doubts and Difficulties are, which surround us in such a Circumstance, 'tis evident, that Conviction must come from within ; of course, we must be determined by our own Judgment, not the authoritative Dictate of another's ; according to *Paul, Let every Man be fully perswaded in his own Mind* ; and in another Place, *not as having Dominion over your Faith*. From whence 'tis manifest, that what is addressed by *Revelation* to the Understanding, must be as clear, simple, and conclusive in Argument, as apparently innocent and beneficial in Practice : rendering needless, the awkward Help of subtle Glosses, and verbose Commentaries ; which must either imply, that something is deficient, or the Writers flagrantly condemn themselves of Imperitence, or worse ; agreeable to what is somewhere said by the ingenious Mr. *Dryden*, of Physicians.

*God never made his Work for Man to mend.* Beside, Gentlemen, the Gospel, which is, and ought to be, the fundamental Rule of our Faith, was first preached to the lowest of the People, the *Apostles* themselves being of no higher Quality ; and what is at one time delivered in Parables, is always explained by the great Master to his Disciples at another : If, therefore, the sacred Doctrines were intelligible to them, they are at least the same to us, and *Christ* himself has given us an Abstract of the whole, which the weakest Head cannot mistake, or the most treacherous Memory lose, *Love God, and serve Mankind ! on these two Commandments, says he, depend all the Law and the Prophets.* And, after his Resur-  
G
rection,

rection, his whole Charge to the *Apostles* is equally concise, *Baptize the Nations, and teach them to observe whatever I have Commanded you.* So obviously evident, so ingenuously simple, were the *Messiah's* own Institutes; and yet, tho' so many 'thousands follow'd him for the Loaves and Fishes, it appears in the *Acts of the Apostles*, that he made but a Hundred and Twenty Converts: a strong Instance of the Inattention and Neglect of Mankind to unadorned and naked Truth. On the contrary, as soon as the *Holy-Ghost* descends, and the Disciples speak with Tongues, as many are made in one Day, as their Master had miraculously fed before. But observe the Consequence, Gentlemen, as soon as the Church grows numerous, Dissensions arise; tho' every Individual was inspir'd with the *Holy-Spirit*. Some *Pharisees* among them could not find in their Hearts to part with their Darling Ceremonies, but had a strong Inclination to graft the Gospel on Circumcision and the Law of *Moses*: which, says the Text, occasioned great Disputes, till *Peter*, arising, declares, *that God had witnessed in Favour of the Gentiles, by giving them the Holy-Ghost; even, says he, as he did unto us, and put no Difference between us and them, Purifying their Hearts by Faith.* Now, therefore, why tempt ye God, to put a Yoke upon the Neck of the Disciples, which neither our Fathers nor we were able to bear? Pray observe, Gentlemen, these remarkable Words are no sooner uttered, but *James* seconds the Moderation of *Peter*, and an Epistle is wrote to the Heathen Proselytes, injoining only these Restrictions, *That ye abstain from Meats offered to Idols, and from Blood, and from Things strangled, and from Fornication: from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well.* You see, Gentlemen, I hope to your Edification, that the Trap-

pings



pings and Garmiture of Religion was one of the  
 first Stumbling-Blocks, even to the primitive  
 Church: But then we have the Pleasure, at the  
 same Time, to hear it called a *Yoke* by a principle  
*Apostle*; and, as such, effectually dispenced with.  
 An Example, one would have thought, which  
 might have served for an Authority to all future  
 Times: Especially, when 'tis farther consider'd,  
 that the *New Testament* uniformly glories in re-  
 moving the Bondage of Superstition, and restore-  
 ing that Liberty which had been for so many Ages  
 lost, according to St. Paul, *Stand fast, therefore,*  
*in the Liberty wherewith Christ has made us free, and*  
*be not intangled again with the Yoke of Bondage;*  
 Whence then this strange and unwarranted Alte-  
 ration, this Parade of Modes and Forms, this Pa-  
 geantry of Title and Ostentation, this Weight of  
 Perquisites and Revenue, this odd Medley of Am-  
 bassadorship and State Dependency, this Anti-  
 christian Yoke, which neither our Fathers nor we were  
 able to bear? Shrewd Questions these, Gentlemen,  
 under the *Christian Dispensation*; and the best way  
 to answer them, I believe, will be to engage St.  
*Peter* in a *Second Visitation*. Let us then suppose,  
 that, just as he is on the Wing for his Return to  
 Paradise, he recollects some broken Ideas of a re-  
 formed Church, which he resolves to take in his  
 Way, in order to part in some Charity for Man-  
 kind. We must likewise suppose, that 'twas un-  
 der the Administration of some Protestant-Priest,  
 who wore a Mitre, like his Holiness's Triple Crown,  
 and had no other Quarrel with the Church of  
*Rome*, but that the Chair of Infallibility could not  
 be at the same Time, in the *Vatican* and at *Lam-*  
*beth*. We must suppose, I say Gentlemen, the  
*Apostle* sets out when Pope *Land* drove so furiously  
 to Church-Power, that he could presume to tell a

Member of the House of Commons, *He hoped soon to see the Day, when never a Jack Gentleman in England should dare to stand before his own Chaplain, with his Hat on.* For, with Respect to the Time being, we must not dare to think for ourselves, either in Religion or Politicks. No, whatever we fear, or whatever we feel, our Superiors will tell us we have no Authority to complain; and that 'tis our Duty to believe all Statesmen Patriots, and all Bishops Saints: Nay, these Doctrines are not only the Mode of the present Times, but have received an equal Sanction from the past. For, even in the Reign of Father *Peters* over *James* the Second, and Pope *Laud* over *Charles* the First, we were told the same: and if any other Period, equally critical, should arise in future Times, without a Spirit of Prophecy, one may venture to declare, that proper Persons will not be wanting, not only to inforce them with Arguments, but even with Fire, and Sword; to prevent the Growth of Schism in the Church, or Disaffection in the State. In a Word, every Age must confine its Satire to the preceeding one: whereby the Humour of Censure will be vented safely, and Persons in Power may enjoy their Vices as secure from Detection and Reproach, as they are from the Laws; and Manners will be ever Reforming, and never Reformed. On this unexceptionable Hypothesis is, Gentlemen, *Peter* must take his Tour, and tho', by his Privilege of Immateriality, he might introduce himself to the Closets, Studies, and most secret Retirements of his reverend Followers, we'll take it for granted, he is too much a Gentleman to make use of any such Advantage, but that he will confine his Enquiries to their Calls to the Gospel, Ordinations, Doctrines, Ways and Means to attain Preferment,  
Use



Use and Application of Power, and their open and avow'd Conduct, manifested by Words and Actions to all the World ; This premised, let us imagine that his first Interview is with a Knot of spiritual Candidates, waiting in the Bishop's Anti-Chamber, to be examined by his Chaplain, if qualified for Holy-Orders ; and that, full of his Notions of a late Reformation, he conceives every one of them to be either prompted by a holy Zeal for God, or an overflowing Love for Mankind ; or else, that these were the Flower of a whole Diocese, collected together by the peculiar Diligence and Care of his Lordship, for their superior Abilities, profound Learning, or exemplary Lives : But how great is his Astonishment, when he discovers that one came to qualify himself only to take Possession of an overgrown Benefice, which was in the Gift of his Family, without the least View beyond receiving the Income, and putting in a Deputy to do the Duty, as cheap as possible ; that another was bred up to the Ministry, as to a Trade, which was to refund the Expence of his Learning with Cent per Cent Profit ; that a third had wasted his Youth as a Lay-Man, in Riot and Debauchery, till his Fortune was exhausted, and now took Sanctuary in the Church, to add Hypocrisy to the rest of his Vices, and acquire a new Subsistence more infamously than he had wasted his former ; that a fourth, of a true pharisaical Spirit, had an Itch to mount the Pulpit, to display his Parts, maintain the Rights of the Church, and dictate to Men wiser than himself, to whose Charity he ow'd the very *Latin* and *Greek* which was the narrow Basis of his Vanity and Presumption ; all being admirably described in the Text, which says, that *where the Carcass is, the Ravens will be gathered together.* And now

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*All  
for  
Holy  
Order*



we may suppose the Deputy-Inquisitor enters, and, with a wonderful Command of Countenance, proceeds to Business; that is to say, proposes Queries, raises Doubts, chops Logick, cites Authorities, plays the Catholick, Presbyterian, Anabaptist, Quaker, Deist, takes up all sorts of Heresies, attacks the System from all Quarters, and exercises his Punies in its Defence, as tho' *Satan* himself covered the Siege: But finding the Veterans stanch, and the fresh Men docible as Heart could wish, calls for Testimonials for Form's-Sake, nails them to the Letter of the Articles, and pronounces them, one and all, Pillars of the Church. In which lucky Interval, as one would imagine it, enters a Candidate of a quite different Cast; a Man who thought the Ministry of God's Word required Purity of Manners, as well as the Ostentation of Learning, the Merit of Zeal, or the Righteousness of Faith; a Man who studied Truth, not to make the best of a ready-made Scheme, and hated Prevarication more than he coveted Preferment; in short, a Man who dared to make use of his Conscience, and declare himself an Enemy to Craft of all Sorts. Matter of Offence enough to disqualify a Man for a Mitre! and, accordingly his Reverence the Deputy-Porter to the Church, for the Time being, bluntly turns the Key upon him at once: You have dared, says he, to make free with the *Father of the Faithful*, and explain away the Merit of *implicit Obedience*, which is Heresy of the rankest Sort, and, therefore, the Church excludes you from her Bosom for ever: On which, *Peter*, a little started at such a Spirit of Reformation, ventures to put in,—Surely, Friend, you have reversed your Instructions, admitted those you should you have refused, and refused those you should have admitted. *It is written, my House shall*  
*be*

*be call'd a House of Prayer, but you have made it a Den of Thieves.* This severe Rebuke, on the other Hand, nettles the spiritual Turnkey; his Face kindles like a Coal from the Altar, and he is ready to call down Fire from Heaven, to extirpate such a Heretick from the Earth: while the Apostle thus proceeds, *Sirs, ye know that by this Craft we have our Wealth,* was the Argument of *Demetrius* the Silver-Smith of *Diana*, and what *Paul* incurr'd such imminent Danger to destroy: Will you therefore presume to build the Gospel of Truth on the same Foundation? or hope, that those, who have the sacred Testament before their Eyes, can or will be deceived by such manifest Forgeries? Can you pretend that these reverend Jugglings have the least Authority from the Religion you profess, or the Scriptures you affect to revere so much? Nay, is not the whole calculated to confound the Understanding, and puzzle Common-Sense? To amuse the Ignorant, shock the Sincere, and arrogate to yourselves a mercenary Importance, by the Custody of Mysteries which are inexplicable, even by those in whose Mints they were coined? yes, I appeal to yourselves, has any one Man, among you, the Shadow of an Image of what he so solemnly swears to believe, and so unjustly forces upon others? What is this then, but to stumble at the very Threshold of Faith, and fly in the Face of your own Consciences, in Order to inflave the Laity *with a Yoke which neither our Fathers nor we were able to bear?* If, on the other Hand, you recur to the Shelter of human Laws for Subterfuge, remember you are, from that Moment, divested of your sacred Ambassadorship from Heaven, and become but mere State-Tools, obliged to subscribe what you are bid, not what your own Judgment witnesses to be



be honest and just ; a Circumstance which puts all Church Establishments on a Level, from *Rome* to *Geneva* ; nay, you may throw in *Indostan* and *Constantinople* into the Bargain ! to this miserable Dilemma, then you are reduced, That, either, you must subscribe in the Dark, thro' stark Ignorance or Stupidity, and then 'tis impossible you should be qualify'd to teach others ; or, if with the Light of Reason full upon the Object, and your Eyes broad open, 'tis as impossible that you should not be Converts to the Craft of *Demetrius*, rather than the Truth of *Paul* -- Now, tho' I am perswaded your Hearts must sympathize with every Word I have spoke, yet, as I know 'tis not your Business to be convinced, I'll endeavour to put all Defence, or even Reply, if possible, out of your Power. Observe, therefore, that 'tis said by one of the *Apostles*, if any *Man has not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his* ; wherein then does it appear that you have this Spirit of *Christ* ? Not in your Garb and Appearance ; he was an Enemy to Robes and Ostentations of every Sort : Not in your Port and Behaviour ; he was meek and lowly : Not at your Tables and Entertainments ; he abhorred Luxury and Riot : Not at your Prayers ; he explicitly forbid vain Repetitions : Not in your Articles of Faith ; he damned no Man for not believing what he could not understand : Not in your Zeal for Tythes, and Church-Authority ; he claimed no Power, had not even a Penny to pay Taxes, nor a place to lay his Head. And, to make short ; not in your Suits, Controversies, and Persecutions ; for he was all Forgiveness and Charity, 'Tis his own excellent Saying, *The Tree is known by his Fruit* ; and if you have not the Spirit of *Christ*, you are none of his. While *Peter* is yet speaking, and his clerkly  
Auditory



Auditory are ready to burst for want of Vent to the Overflowing of their Godly Spleen; regretting above Measure, that they had not the Convenience of an Inquisition but one Week in a Year; his Lordship himself enters with an affected Humility, by way of Surplice over his real Pride; and, as *Peter* prepares to accost him, passes thro' with a running Bow, excusing his Duty to the Church, by his Devotion elsewhere, and his Zeal for the Good of the Nation. And, while the reverend Groupe remain still fixed in a Posture of Adoration, *Drive on* was the Word, and the Chariot rolls off almost with as much Speed as *Elijah's* to Heaven. However, Gentlemen, we must suppose our *Apostle*, determined not to let him escape so, but to trace him thro' all his Doubles, till an Occasion offered to hold him at bay, and oblige him to hear at least; tho' nothing less than a Miracle could do more. And whether drives this priestly *Jehu* so furiously? To reclaim the Apostate? To confirm the Doubtful? To promote obscure Merit? To serve *God*, his Country or Mankind? No, these are vulgar Duties and beneath his Dignity: His Business is to challenge the Reward of his loyal Drudgery for reducing his Sub-alterns to Order, for qualifying the stubborn Old, and tutoring the tractable Young; for setting his Mark on all who were *God's* Elect, that is to say, who were of the right Stamp; and, in a Word, making Church and State to answer like a Couple of Tallies-- You will naturally suppose, Gentlemen, that so useful an Implement does not wait long for Admittance. On the contrary, every Door seems to open spontaneously to him, and every other Suiter gives him way: But *Peter*, tho' close at his Heels, has the very same Doors flung in his Face. For it

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seems 'tis a Maxim there for Prelacy to be received and Sanctity shut out ; At which Time this Place is as inaccessible as the Holy of Holies : but for quite different Reasons, and has more need of a Veil than the Ark itself — For, when Policy and Religion generate, the Birth must needs be a Monster ; and who knows but that Monster may be the real long-disputed *Anti-Christ* ? Infinitely out of Humour with such a Sample of Reformation, as 'tis natural to imagine, our *Apostle* resolves to employ this Interval in examining the Doctrine and Discipline of the Churches ; and a Crisis, like that before mentioned, never fails to unmasque every venerable Hypocrite, and make them vie with each other in Zeal and Loyalty ; as if a Bishoprick, or Deanery at least, were the only Paths to Heaven : For when Oppression is to be sanctified, and Precedents for Grievances are to be extracted from holy-Writ, 'tis the Harvest of these Temporisers ; and they seldom neglect to apply the Proverb to their own Advantage ; accordingly, from one Pulpit he hears for the Cry, *Let every Soul be subject to the Higher Powers, for there is no Power but of God* ; from whence is concluded that Tyranny itself has likewise a Right divine, and 'tis the Duty of the Herd to submit to be fleeced or fleyed, by their Pastors of both Sorts at Discretion. *There is no Power but of God*, being used as such a knock-down Argument, that for a Subject to withdraw his Allegiance from his Prince, is to deny the Authority of *God* ; to be guilty of Treason against his Prince, is Sacrilege with respect to *God* ; a Revolt from Him, is Apostacy from *God* ; a Resisting Him, is opposing *God* ; Rebelling against Him, is Fighting with *God* ; setting up a new Title, is introducing a Plurality of God-heads ;

heads; the Obeying an Usurper, is Idolatry; the Slandering his Anointed, a Blaspheming God; and even blaming his Conduct, quarrelling with the Providence of God.

Another *Reverend Father*, wraps himself round with Court-Sack-Cloth, and embalms the Dead, by way of Incence to the Living. From him, the *Apostle* hears with Astonishment, that never but once before *Virtue* lived embodied on the Earth, and now only, and not till now, *Astrea* took her Flight to Heaven. That, in most Instances Quality distinguishes Merit, but here Merit adorned Quality; that Envy itself gave way to Admiration, and owned even the most exaggerated Hyberboles could not praise too much; that, in fine, Immortality could not bestow more Perfection, the Forms of Angels more Beauty, or the Conversation of Heaven more Wisdom.

A *third* urged most pathetically, that *Those who served at the Altar should live by the Altar*; and was as furious for the divine Right of Prelacy as his zealous Brother, for that of the Lord's Anointed: With him, the Church was as absolute in Spirituals, as the Civil Magistrate in Temporals; and the least Invasion from any Quarter whatever, was worse than the Seven deadly Sins; that if any thing ought to unhinge the Loyalty of the Subject, it ought to be the First Trespass from the Sovereign, tho' ever so minute, on the Power or Possessions of those who minister in Holy Things; that Tythes are appointed by the Old Testament, and Charity recommended by the New; consequently, the First was theirs by a positive Institute, and to attempt to foreclose the Last, with respect to the Church, was to put a Stop to good Works, and rob God of his Glory.

A *Fourth* refined upon all the Rest, With him, not only Kings and Queens, were nursing Fa-



thers and nursing Mothers, and our Spiritual Guides the indisputable Successors of the *Apostles*, and Embassadors of God; but every Vicar and Curate were our natural Leige-Lords in Spirituals; and every Minister of Power, from a Lord of the Treasury to a Messenger of State, was to be revered and obeyed: It being a sort of Petit-Treason, even to breath a Complaint against any, or either of them: For it is written, *Thou shalt not speak Evil of the Rulers of my People*; Whence he ingeniously derives a Ray of Majesty to every Spark of Power, and logically concludes, that what is sacred in the Whole, must be the same in every Part.

With these, and suchlike Topicks of Reformation, our *Visitor* is almost every-where harangued, within the Influence of Court-Sun-shine, and the gilded Prospect of preferment. But not a Word any where, of such Points as these: As in *Deuteronomy*, *Moses* speaking of the King to be chosen from among the People; *neither shall he greatly Multiply to Himself, Silver and Gold*—In *Kings*, *If thou wilt be a Servant unto this People this Day, and wilt serve them, and answer them, and speak good Words to them, then will they be thy Servants for ever*. — In the *Proverbs* likewise, *A roaring Lion and a ranging Bear, is a wicked Ruler over the poor People*. And lastly, *The Prophet, which sha'll presume to speak a Word in my Name, which I have not commanded him to speak, shall dye*.

Thus convinced of the Temper and Spirit of these Demi-Catholicks, *Peter* turns his Eye from the Speakers to their Auditories; and with Admiration observes the profound Insensibility, which seems to reign among them all: Not a Whisper, not a Muscle betraying the least Resentment of being declared Slaves both in Body  
and

and Soul, even by those, whose very Subsistence depends on the Beneficence and Generosity of their Ancestors, with the Bible before them too, in their own Native Language, with their Eyes open to the Oppressions and Delusions of their Neighbours, and with the Experience of past Times to warrant their Zeal for the Progress of Reformation.

To account, therefore, for this strange Infatuation, he turns over the Annals of our Story, scrutinizes into our Principles of civil and religious Policy, our Characters and Conduct, and, finds, almost in every Page, Examples of every Virtue; Heroes that lived and died the Martyrs of Honour, Patriots of their Country, and Saints of their Religion: But that our Virtues lived no longer than they were opposed; for whatever Aversion we had to Tyranny of all Sorts, however impatient under the Yoke, however determined to remove it, however happy in effecting it; we laboured rather to have Liberty in our Power, then make it secure for the Time to come. Hence the Oppressor punished, the Oppression remained; and, from the most intractable, we became all at once the most complaisant People in the Universe; so that, like *Sisyphus* and his Stone, we ever had, and perhaps ever shall have, the very same Task to accomplish thro' all Eternity.

Concluding, therefore, this was one of our Periodical State-Lentors, and stimulated with a noble Zeal to restore us to a Sense of our Interest, Glory, and Virtue; let us now, Gentlemen, take the Liberty to suppose that he lays aside his obscure Disguise, and that, like himself, with Truth to prove his Apostleship, and the Gospel to authorize his Precepts, he appears in one of our most frequent and most august Assemblies, and thus delivers himself.

*Men,*

*Men, Brethern, and Fathers.* 'Tis an established Maxim of the divine *Messiah's*, *That ye cannot serve God and Mammon*; and 'tis a manifest Conclusion from it, that those who devote themselves to the Administration of holy things, ought to have little or no Commerce with the things of this World. This is the uniform Tenour of *Christianity*; and Titles, Power, and Revenues, are not only not recommended by it, but absolutely and expressly renounced; *My Kingdom is not of this World: take no thought for To-morrow, saying, what shall we Eat. Go thy Way, sell whatever thou hast, and give to the Poor*, all which, and many more Precepts of the like Nature demonstrate, that self-Denial was the fundamental Principle of the Gospel, and that Men should first begin to mortify their own Passions, before they undertook to restrain those of Others: *By this shall all Men know that ye are my Disciples.* It was to be their first and most glorious Distinction, and it remains to this Hour, the only Test by which we can judge of those who call themselves his Ministers. 'Tis not therefore barely to profess *Christianity*, or bow at the Name of *Jesus*, or practise any other outward Symptom of Devotion whatever, that proves we are his Disciples. No; our Lives and Actions must warrant our Professions; and if those are repugnant, we are Hypocrites, and not Disciples. This is so flagrant a Truth, that I think there is no one here before me, who will presume to dispute it; and if it is not to be disputed, With what Face would any Man, or Body of Men, pretend to make Innovations in the Doctrines, Maxims, and Government of the Church of *Christ*, without a Shadow of Authority from him while on Earth, or even the Sanction of any After-Revelation to prevent Scruples,



ples, or satisfy Enquiry? for, on the contrary, while he lived, when he died, at his Resurrection, and after the Descent of the *Holy-Ghost*, his System is still the same, to reform, not enslave Mankind; Nor did any of his *Apostles* assume a delegated Power of establishing such Innovations, or, like *Moses*, declare they had received a Pattern from their Lord, of Ceremonies, Creeds, and Mysteries, which required an absolute implicit Obedience, on certain Pains and Penalties, which were left to them to appoint at Discretion. In a Word, Faith and Charity, universal Charity is the Sum of their Precepts, as well as the *Messiah's*, and 'tis foolish to suppose, that after their Commentaries on the Principles and Practice of the *Messiah*, the World should stand in Need of any other. If therefore, any such Innovations have intruded on the Church, they are of Men, and, 'tis more than probable, the worst of Men: Now every Thing is an Innovation which is not immediately recommended by *Christ* or his *Disciples*, or to be obviously deduced from their Doctrines; and whatever has a Tendency to Oppression and Slavery, is not only not authorized by them, but diametrically opposite to the whole Purport of the Gospel: He himself declaring, *My Yoke is easy, and my Burthen is light* and one of his Apostles after him, *Why therefore tempt ye God, to put a Yoke upon the Neck of the Disciples, which neither our Fathers nor we were able to bear.* Every Step, therefore, to corrupt the Purity and Simplicity of the Gospel, and constrain it to be the Tool of Imposture, Avarice and Ambition, is putting a Yoke upon the Neck of Believers, and manifestly 'proves that none but the worst of Men would be guilty of it. Nor are you to flatter yourselves, that what is bad in itself, can be good in its Consequences;

quences ; *you cannot serve God and Mammon* : Whatever specious Pretences then have been made Use of, every such Corruption of Truth is both an Affront to Reason and Revelation, and has no other Point in View, but the Introduction of Worldly Power, and grafting Priestcraft, on that very Faith which was revealed in a manner to destroy it -- Thus, when the Disinterestedness Integrity, and Constancy of the primitive *Christians*, had got the better of Persecution, and Truth by its own Power established itself ; when even the Magistrate grew a Convert to it, and a Crisis was offered to exalt Human-Nature to its highest Pitch of Perfection ; then the Fathers of the Church changed Manners with the Times, and, by seeing themselves of Importance to Kings, resolved to put in for a Share of their Authority : But as this was not practicable all at once, or without the Cloak and Cover of Religion, the Word Spiritual was tacked to Power, and 'twas exercised on the Bodies of Men, for the Benefit of their Souls. 'Tis the Imperfection of Mankind, that the Virtues and Vices nearest a-kin, grow up in the same Constitution and the same Age together ; thus Religion and Superstition flourished on one Stalk, and the same Arguments which made Men *Christians*, prepared them for Bondage. Hence these reverend Impostors were easily admitted to the Privilege of going Halves in Government ; but, not contented with that, and greedily endeavouring to ingross the Whole, were in manifest Danger of losing what they possessed. *Oppression will make a wise Man Mad* ; and what was so severely, felt and universally complained of, naturally drew on Enquiry and Examination ; a Test, which Falshood and Injustice can neither indure or forgive : Accordingly, as soon as Men opened  
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their Eyes, Truth could not be concealed; and what was so apparently a Grievance, as loudly called for a Reformation--A Reformation, my Fellow *Christians*, which, honestly and impartially conducted, must have ended in a total Abolition of all the spurious and unprofitable Pageantry, which Fraud and Wickedness had superinduced upon Religion -- *The galling Yoke which neither our Fathers or we were able to bear?* On this Occasion the Gospel, which had been long imprisoned in Cells and Convents, was again set free; and made again the Instrument of setting free Mankind. As soon as this heavenly Light appeared, Infallibility, Image-worship, Prayers to Saints, Purgatory, Penance, Absolution, the divine Right of Episcopacy, and a thousand other Forgeries, vanished like so many Dreams; *For not being of God, they could not stand:* This was the great, and prevailing Reason to destroy them; 'twas thought absurd to call that *Christianity*, which had not the least Authority from *Christ*, or to render the Gospel of Liberty, *a Yoke which neither our Fathers nor we were able to bear:* If, therefore, 'twas right and equitable to carry on this great Work thus far, for the sake of Liberty and Truth, why was a Period put to it so soon? And, if a Reformation was intended, why did it end in a Compromise? If any one Innovation was obnoxious, so were all; and if the Gospel is and ought to be the Rule of Life, all that is foreign to it, and inconsistent with it, should be lopp'd off without Mercy: Why then, I say again, did this intended Reformation end in a Compromise? *ye cannot serve God and Mammon.* If, therefore, ye have not restored divine Worship to its primitive Purity, what Reasons can ye give for suffering any Abuse or Perversion still to remain? None, none, that are  
authorized



authorized either by Revelation or Common-Sense ; on the contrary ? Have not ye made a Craft of your High-Calling ? Have not ye struck up a Bargain with Power, and stipulated, that Prelacy should be inflaved on one Hand, provided it might tyrannize on the Other ? you know you have, and have endeavoured to do what's impossible, to *serve both God and Mammon*, or, rather to deceive the First, while you really idolize the Last. No Wonder, therefore, that where *your Treasures are, your Hearts are also* ; or that you cry out, the Church ! the Church is in Danger ! when honest, and impartial Men pry into your Principles and Conduct, in order to oblige you to a Modest and Apostolick Life, and to redeem themselves from the worst of all Yokes, *which neither our Fathers nor we were able to bear*. 'Tis in vain to call upon secular Power, or denounce the Judgments of God on these Occasions ; God never was, or will, or can be a Partner in Fraud or Tyranny ; and whatever you pretend of divine Permission, it can be true in no other Sense, than as Plagues, Wars, and Famines are permitted to lay waste the World. Then, as to secular Power, there is not any one Authority for any such Appeal, in the whole Institution of the *Christian-Faith* : Nay 'tis apparently opposite to the whole Current of its Doctrines, and the Example of the *Messiah* himself, and those of his *Apostles*. Have you no Shame then, that you not only presume, by all sorts of Arts, to accumulate Power, Riches, and Honour, even to the inflaving your Benefactors ; but call upon God and Man to punish them, when they justly challenge you to make out a Gospel Title to Either ? *I tell you then you cannot serve God and Mammon ; nor have you the least Right to put a Yoke upon the Neck of the Disciples, which neither our Fathers nor we were able to bear.* If

If *Apostles* were appointed, at first, to preach the Gospel and Baptize as many as believed, they carried their Credentials with them -- *Miracles, and the Holy-Ghost* : But where are yours ? or what one Excellency or Virtue are you privileged to above the Laity ? or what peculiar Grace or Benefit have you to bestow in Return for all those you receive ? If none, you ought to blush for what you already possess, instead of contending for more. Again, if these enormous Acquisitions of yours were extorted by Violence, or procured by Fraud, the very Acquirement was unjust, and you have no Title to what you enjoy : If they were bestowed in Exchange for some valuable Consideration, that Consideration is the Tenure ; which failing, or withheld the Bargain's avoid : And if they were a Free-Gift, then are they to be looked upon as the Generosity, Beneficence and Charity, of a benevolent People ; and ought to be received with Gratitude, and used with Humility -- *But ye cannot serve God and Mammon* : And for any Part of a Nation, or Community, to claim a Divine-Right, to carve out to themselves what Portion of their Brethrens Property they please, is to set up a separate Interest against the Whole, and cherish an inmate Enemy infinitely more dangerous and destructive, than any foreign one whatever. I must, therefore, once more remind you, that this Divine-Right of Property, and those other ecclesiastick Prerogatives of Spiritual and Temporal Powers and Titles, are all of *anti-christian* Growth ; and are so far from being insinuated (tho ever so remotely) in the Gospel that they are utterly disclaimed and forbid : But of all your Usurpations, the Monopolizing the Word *Church*, is the most dangerous, as being the grand Basis on which the rest of your pious Inroachments were founded ;

it being appropriated in the Beginning to all Believers alike, and, to this Moment, belonging alike to all, not to any Place or Order of Men whatever, tho' doubly and trebly consecrated, with Forms and Ceremonies innumerable. This leads me farther to enquire, What you mean by a Consecration? Is there any real Virtue in it? Do you really bestow the Gift of the *Holy-Ghost* by laying on of Hands, as the *Apostles* did? or do you continue this Custom only to convince the People,--that you might as well let it alone? If you might as well let it alone, and no Symptom of the *Holy-Ghost* follows it, or the Access of any real Virtue; is not the whole Affair a manifest Deception to give an ideal Sanctity, to what is the mere Creature of the Law? I might say abundantly more of Excommunication, your Taxes on Marriages, Life and Death, and many other extraordinary Instances of spiritual Ledgerdmain; but that I hasten to a more refined Artifice, than is contained in Either of the Others, I mean the Turn-Pike of Tests which appears to me set up as an additional Weight, to that Yoke, *which neither our Fathers nor we were able to bear*. For my Part, I remember but one Thing of this Nature, thro' both the Testaments, the pronouncing the Word *Skibboleth*, which was made an Instrument by one Part of *Israel*, to destroy the Other. I don't accuse your present Snare, as a Test of this sanguinary Nature. But, this I am sure of, you have as much Authority to trap Men's Lives, as their Consciences, and, with the same Reason, and Justice that you established this, you may multiply as many more Tests as you please. Men, born equally free, and equally contributing to the Support of a Government, and the Peace of Society, are equally intitled to all the Privileges



privileges of that Society, and the Favour, and Trust of that Government; mere Matters of Faith and Speculation, not interfering in the least with Obedience to the Magistrate, or the Welfare of the People. But, according to your Politicks, he that will swallow most Absurdities, is the honestest Man, and he that has the most Scruples, ought to be trusted the least: Whereby you leave a Door open for your Enemies to conclude, that, tho' your Duty to Heaven is the Pretence, your Love of the World is the real Motive; and that, by excluding Men who conscientiously fear an Oath, you have an Opportunity of leavening the whole Clerical Lump as you please.

In a Word, the Gospel, in its primitive uncorrupted Purity, contains all of Religion that is of Importance to Mankind; to enforce the Duties of Piety, Meekness, Humility, and Self-Denial, so warmly recommended there, by Example, as well as Precept, is your whole Province: And, till you are not only inwardly convinced of these Truths, but honestly confess them to the World, your Doctrines will be those of Craft and Hypocrisy, not Reformation; *you cannot serve God and Mammon*. 'Tis in vain to talk of Councils and Fathers; the blessed *Messiah* plainly and clearly declared his own Will, and 'tis the highest Insolence for any professing his Faith, to presume to make the least Addition to it. Now, *Church-Government* has not the least Authority from him, nay, is manifestly the Creature of Policy, not of Religion; of course, is in itself so perfectly indifferent, that, as long as the Clergy behave with Integrity and Modesty, and divine Service is celebrated with Decency and Reverence by the People, 'tis of no Importance after what Pattern 'tis modelled. On the other Hand, the Abuse of  
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it, has not only deluged whole Nations with Blood, and saddened the Annals of Time, with a Series of Guilt and Misery, but reversed the very Nature, and End of Devotion ; taught Men to act like Devils for the Honour of *God*, and utterly extirpated that beautiful Forbearance, Affection, and Charity, which ought to distinguish Reason from Brutality, and make the Transition almost imperceptible, from the Conversation of Men, to that of Angels.

As, therefore, you never bring this terrible Engine, into Play, but with Design to extract some additional Good out of the general Evil, is it not most amazing that any should be found so stupid, or servile, as to stoop to the Yoke, which was so grievous to their Fathers ? or to be made the Tools of designing Men, to enslave and impoverish themselves ? For, whatever you gain, they lose, and the same Instant that you become Lords, they become Vassals -- 'Tis true, this Tameness and Subjection on one Hand, and this Grandeur and Haughtiness on the Other, crept upon the World by Degrees, and Ignorance and Superstition ; first put on those Chains, which Religion and Knowledge, must as gradually destroy -- To conclude, were your Revenues and Lordships, your Authorities and Precedencies, your Tests and Articles, your Forms and Devices to be established now, the last and lowest of the People, would disdain a Yoke, *which neither our Fathers nor we were able to bear* ; or, to speak more largely, If Fifteen or Twenty Thousand Men, should now demand to live exempt from the common Cares, Toils, and Services of Life, in Ease, Indolence and Luxury ; and not only that their Usefulness to Society should be thus totally cut off, but a Fifth part of the Property of Eight  
Millions

Millions of People, should be set aside for their Support ; if, to all this they should farther insist on being intrusted with Education, Manners, and Laws, should challenge a Power over the Conscience, and pretend to inflict Pains and Penalties, in case any Man presumed to think for himself, should arrogate Titles and Privileges apart from, and superior to the secular Power, and should confidently assert they had a Patent from *God* for all this, which they could not produce, nor any Body ever saw, or the least Record, or Memorial to authorize so astonishing a Claim : I say, if such an astonishing Claim as this was now to be made, it would be impossible for the most artful Practises, of the most artful Men, to preserve themselves even from the Resentments it would infallibly cause ; much less be able to carry any one Article, or persuade any one disinterested Person to be of their side -- Neither would this ill Success of theirs, be owing to the Growth of Infidelity, or any other chimerical Pretence which is usually made to kindle the Fire of Persecution, and sacrifice Reason and Common-Sense ; but to the Light of the Gospel only — While Men had the great Fountain of their Religion in the Vulgar Tongue, it would be Labour in vain, to interpret Power, Wealth, Titles, and Luxury out of a System, which was set up in Contempt of Them all ; and the whole People of the Earth would exclaim with one Voice, *ye cannot serve God and Mammon* ; ---- If, therefore, ye will not reform yourselves to *Gospel-Christians*, at least behave yourselves with Decency and Gratitude to those, who, tho' their Eyes are opened, suffer you still to enjoy in Peace, what your Predecessors acquired by Rapine and Fraud. If the Churchingrosses your first and principal Concern, let the Good of  
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the People be your Second ! And, if temporal Power is so irresistably charming, at least employ it to your Honour, and the Advancement of private and publick Virtue.

If you cannot prevail with yourselves to lay aside your present useles, or even obnoxious Ceremonies, why don't you revive such as are self-evidently grand, noble, and publick-spirited among the old and obsolete ? I have read of one established by the most solemn Laws, never yet repealed, which 'tis your Duty, and would be greatly for your Honour, and even Interest to restore—the Reading *Magna Charta*, or the Grand Instrument of the People's Rights in your Churches ; this was ordained, that Liberty might go Hand in Hand with Devotion, as being of as much Importance to present Enjoyments, as Religion to those of Futurity. Would you, therefore, have your Fellow-Subjects accept you for their Guides to the other World, lose no Opportunity of serving them in this ! To preach the Gospel of Liberty, and yet connive at Oppression ; to receive a magnificent Support from the People, and yet become instrumental to enslave the People ; are as inconsistent with Revelation, as the Principles of natural Reason : and, if such is your Practice, you will make very few sincere Converts to your Principle's ; Men must feel Benefits, as well as hear them talked of ; and when Experience has taught them, who are their Friends, 'tis not possible by any Art, or even Force itself, to make them ungrateful.

Observe now, what a noble Sphere you have to act in, and how large a Commission to be serviceable to Mankind : On one Hand, intrusted with the Privilege of propagating the benevolent Duties of private Life ; and, on the other, with expatiating on this grand, and venerable Deposit  
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of the Liberties of the Publick ; a Treasure, you were antiently enjoined to preserve as the Apple of your Eye ; nay you were Commanded to be perfect in its Origin, Contents and Use, and to make a matter of Conscience, of explaining it, from Time to Time, to the People, that no Body might be ignorant of his Birth-Right, or be liable to be seduced, threatned, or bribed to give it away ; that the Fame, Virtue, and Sufferings of the illustrious Champions, who acquired and preserved to there Posterity, might be ever before their Eyes ; and the great and heroick Spirit, which animated them in Defence of their Country, might live, not only in Memory, but Effect thro' all Generations.--

Such was the generous Design of those Magnanimous Patriots : But so soon and so effectually did the Instruments of Power prevail, with these false and corrupted Trustees, to set it aside, that scarce even in Tradition, do the Traces of so glorious a Custom remain ! From whence I must again admonish you, that, both in Politicks and Religion, *'tis impossible to serve God and Mammon.*

F I N I S.

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